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ABSTRACT

An initiative of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications is a membership organization working to strengthen the efficiency, impact, and quality of educational telecommunications systems and programs. Most of the members are institutions of higher education, but the Western Cooperative also involves public school agencies and districts, state telecommunications agencies, public broadcasting systems, libraries, and private firms. 1990 was a year of relatively little action on educational telecommunications legislation in the West. Many of the states started major initiatives in 1989, and implementation was only beginning in 1990. Five major trends can be seen, however, during 1990 legislative sessions: (1) use of educational telecommunications continues to grow; (2) statewide planning continues to be a concern; (3) cooperation between schools and businesses, higher education institutions, and local governments has increased; (4) new educational technologies such as microcomputers and video continue to emerge; and (5) the role of the telephone communications industry in providing data services to state governments or educational systems continues to be studied. This report provides a summary of the major trends and legislative actions and information updates for the 16 Western Cooperative states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. (DB)

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Western Cooperative
for Educational Telecommunications

EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE WEST:

1990 State Legislative Actions

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EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE WEST:

1990 STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

by **Dwight Dively**

for the
Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications
an initiative of the
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

The Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications is an initiative of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a nonprofit regional organization established by interstate compact to help western states to work together to provide high-quality, cost-effective programs to meet the education and manpower needs of the western region. Member and affiliated states are: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

The Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications was established by WICHE in July 1989 to promote resource and information sharing in the use of telecommunications and other technologies for education. For further information, contact the Western Cooperative, P. O. Drawer P, Boulder, CO 80301-9752; telephone: 303-497-0231.

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SUMMARY OF MAJOR TRENDS

1990 was a year of relatively little action on educational telecommunications legislation in the West. Many of the states started major initiatives in 1989, and implementation was only beginning in 1990. This meant that there was little need for additional legislation to modify or expand state activities. In addition, the following western states have biennial legislatures which did not meet in regular session during 1990: Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, and Oregon.

The actions taken during 1990 legislative sessions revealed five major trends:

1. **Use of educational telecommunications continues to grow**. The use of existing systems grew in almost every state, and several states completed the development of new systems during 1990.

2. **State planning continues to be a concern**. Several states are still in the process of developing state telecommunications plans, often for the second or third time in the last decade. Major issues seem to revolve around governance, cooperation among different types of organizations, and the appropriate technologies to be used.

3. **Cooperation among different telecommunications users continues to expand**. Until recently, higher education institutions, public schools, and state and local governments typically operated independent, uncoordinated telecommunications systems. In the last few years, financial and administrative pressures have encouraged cooperation among different institutions in many of the western states. This trend continued in 1990, with several states establishing or strengthening coordinating bodies. In addition, there were several new efforts to develop integrated telecommunications plans.

4. **New technologies continue to emerge**. Several major systems that will use compressed video will be deployed by the end of 1990. Recent advances in the integration of computers and video systems is capturing the interest of educational telecommunications planners.

5. **The role of telephone common carriers continues to be studied**. In several states, the telephone common carriers are seeking to offer comprehensive audio, video, and data services to state governments or educational systems. Many of these states are struggling with how to handle such

situations. In some cases, the carrier is an active partner in an overall state strategy; in other states, carriers may be competitors for government-owned systems.

The year 1991 is likely to be a critical one for educational telecommunications in the West. Many states will consider funding plans for new systems, and others will see requests for expanded access to existing systems. New governance plans will be considered in at least five states. The Western Cooperative will be available to facilitate information sharing during these discussions.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS AND STATE UPDATES

Alaska

In 1990, the Alaska Legislature approved House Bill 402 which creates a Center for Information Technology at the University of Alaska. The Center will be based in Anchorage but will also have components in Fairbanks and Juneau.

House Bill 402 cites several reasons for creating the Center for Information Technology. It notes that Alaska has already made large investments in information systems and that these systems are critical to the state's economy. Moreover, it notes that the state's telecommunications networks have not kept up with technological developments and that there has been insufficient coordination of systems.

In response to the above concerns, the Center for Information Technology will offer and coordinate a variety of programs, including education, training, and research on information technologies. A special emphasis will be placed on the development and expansion of a geographic information systems curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The use of geographic systems is especially important in Alaska because of the state's large size and the role of natural resources in its economy.

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Arizona

The 1990 Arizona Legislature did not consider any bills having significant effects on educational telecommunications in the state. Funding shortages made it impractical to consider expenditures for expansion of existing systems.

Arizona did complete the study of a statewide telecommunications system called for in legislation passed in 1989. The report was presented by the Arizona Education Telecommunications Cooperative in January and recommends expansion of systems to serve education, government, and social service organizations. A request for several million dollars of state funding to begin implementation of the report's findings may be submitted to the 1991 legislative session.

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California

The major legislative initiative underway in California is a response to Assembly Bill 1470, passed in 1989. This bill created the California Planning Commission for Educational Technology, which is charged with developing a state master plan for the coordination and use of technology in public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools. Eighteen commissioners have been appointed, representing businesses and all levels of education. The Commission's first meeting was in early September 1990, with a final report due by January 1992.

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Colorado

The 1990 Colorado Legislature approved Senate Bill 94 (S.B. 94), which has two basic parts. The first part is a follow-up on the 1989 telecommunications plan. Legislation approved in 1989 created the Colorado Telecommunications Advisory Commission and directed it to prepare a plan for improving the use and coordination of state telecommunications facilities and services. S.B. 94 calls on the Commission to prepare a new report by December 15, 1990, updating the telecommunications plan and identifying progress in the plan's implementation. S.B 94 also explicitly directs the Commission to study the use of telecommunications systems by the governing boards of the state's higher education institutions. Members of the Commission include representatives from K-12 and postsecondary education, the Department of Administration, and the telecommunications industry.

The second part of S.B. 94 directs the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and Telecommunications Advisory Commission to prepare a plan for using telecommunications to improve math, science, and technology education in public schools. The plan will cover goals, curriculum designs, teacher training plans, plans for improving access to systems, and cost

estimates, and will be submitted to the General Assembly by December 15, 1990. In addition, the same three organizations are to study the feasibility of establishing a statewide magnet school for math, science, and foreign language instruction.

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Hawaii

No new legislative initiatives were undertaken in 1990. Hawaii continues to implement the statewide Hawaii Interactive Television System (HITS), which was authorized in 1988. The basic HITS backbone was completed in 1990, which links six institutional sites and seven transmitter locations covering all five major islands. The next steps in implementation are to extend the system to the remaining campuses of the University system and to develop linkages with local cable television firms to provide access to K-12 schools.

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Idaho

Near the end of the 1990 legislative session, a supplemental appropriation of $479,500 was approved for expanding telecommunications services offered through the University of Idaho's agricultural extension offices. Idaho has extension offices in 42 of its 44 counties, and about half of these locations are already equipped with satellite downlinks. The supplemental appropriation will fund the installation of downlinks at the remaining locations and will support some programming activities. Programs are expected to go beyond agricultural offerings to include education, economic development, and social service efforts.

The University of Idaho is expected to request additional funds in 1991 for production facilities to serve this new network. In addition, several other 1991 initiatives may be considered, including planning and coordination activities, and a demonstration project in the use of compressed video in the southeastern corner of the state.

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Minnesota

Minnesota continues to pursue the development of the Statewide Telecommunications Access and Routing System (STARS). This system will ultimately include video, audio, and data networks. In 1990, the Minnesota Legislature authorized a $900,000 loan from the Department of Administration's revolving fund that will allow completion of the planning process and issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP). This loan will have to be repaid over a five-year period if the STARS system is implemented.

The RFP will be issued in October 1990 and will cover full development of the data and voice networks. It will provide for a gradual implementation of the video system by adding sites and capacity incrementally. Implementation of the STARS system will depend on actions and funding by the 1991 legislature.

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Montana

The Montana Legislature did not meet during 1990. However, considerable activity is under way as a result of legislation enacted in 1989. House Bill 28 authorized $200,000 for a statewide study of existing telecommunications networks and $300,000 for the implementation of portions of the resulting plan. The study of existing systems and analysis of alternatives was completed in the summer of 1990. The state is now in the process of determining how to spend the remaining $300,000 of the original appropriation. Additional funding may be sought during the next legislative session.

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Nevada

The Nevada Legislature did not meet in regular session in 1990. Implementation of Senate Bill 247 (S.B. 247) from the 1989 session has progressed this year. S.B. 247 created a Telecommunications Division within the Department of General Services and also authorized an Advisory Board on Telecommunications. The Board includes representatives of the University of Nevada System, the state K-12 education system, state and local agencies, and the private sector.

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The 1990 New Mexico Legislature appropriated $500,000 for capital development of the state's instructional television system. This amount was a reduction from the original request of $1,200,000, which would have covered a variety of capital and programming costs. The reduced amount will be used soley for capital improvements, such as new microwave transmitters. Additional funding requests are currently being developed and will be submitted for the 1991 session.

The Legislature also assigned responsibility for the instructional television network to the Commission on Higher Education. The Commission will need to consider how the existing systems will interact with a statewide educational fiber optic network that has recently been announced by U S WEST.

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North Dakota

North Dakota's Legislature did not meet in regular session in 1990. Last year, the Legislature approved a bill creating the state Educational Telecommunications Council. During 1989 and 1990, the Council and its consultant conducted a study of the state's current educational telecommunications capabilities and developed a plan for improvements. The consultant's report was issued in April 1990 and calls for significant expansion of computer and telecommunications networks. This plan would require $1.3 million for the video network and $3.7 million for the computer network in fiscal year 1991. Costs would rise in subsequent years until the system was fully developed.

Meanwhile, implementation of several systems continues. The initial phase of a compressed video network is now in final testing. Approximately $1.3 million will be requested from the 1991 Legislature for two-year operational costs of this system. In addition, the Educational Telecommunications Council plans to submit a funding request for the further development of a statewide educational telecommunications system.

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Oregon

The 1989 Legislature approved $8.5 million to implement Ed-Net, Oregon's proposed statewide educational telecommunication system. Since that time, the Ed-Net Board has been appointed, a Request for Proposals has been issued, and contracts awarded for the development of the three major Ed-Net networks. One network will be a compressed video system serving major educational institutions and business locations, a second network will provide satellite connections for public schools and libraries, and a third network will meet needs for data communications. Some portions of the networks will be in place by the end of 1990, with full deployment by mid-1991.

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South Dakota

No significant educational telecommunications legislation was approved in 1990. The Governor's office is currently considering a plan to coordinate the state's telecommunications initiatives.

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Utah

No major actions affecting educational telecommunications were taken by the Utah Legislature. A reorganization of state government created a new Division of Information Technology Services out of the previous divisions of Telecommunications and Data Processing. This reorganization does change the membership of the state's telecommunications cooperative. Funding continues to be available for expansion of the statewide microwave network, which now links 25 sites. Several high schools and area vocational centers have been added during the last year.

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Washington

The Washington Legislature passed House Bill 2403 in 1990, which calls for the development of a plan for a statewide video telecommunications system which would provide for service to all levels of the education system, state and local governments, and the general public. An appropriation of $179,000 was made for the development of the plan and a consultant was hired in July. Portions of the study relating to needs and existing resources have been completed. Work is under way on evaluation of technologies and reviews of governance options. A final plan is to be presented to the Legislature and Governor by December 1, 1990.

The 1990 supplemental budget included two additional appropriations related to educational telecommunications. The Department of Information Services received $1.2 million for

video telecommunications, with $1 million designated for new equipment. The Superintendent of Public Instruction's office received $30,000 to conduct a study of the use of educational programming that includes commercials in the public schools. This report will be complete by the end of 1990.

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Wyoming

The Wyoming Telecommunications Division completed a new five-year plan for the state. This plan includes provisions for implementing a statewide telecommunications network for data, voice, and compressed video using available facilities. In 1990, the Wyoming Legislature met for budget considerations only, so action on the plan will be considered in 1991.

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